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WorldBriefs

Call for US oil boycott

The federation of European Greens has called for a boycott of US oil companies in response to President Bush's caning of the Kyoto protocol. An international day of action is planned for the lead up to the Bonn climate negotiations in July. The day is being pushed by Seattle-based NGO Pressurepoint and Friends of the Earth International, and will focus specific attention on the biggest oil company in the United States: Exxon Mobil (Esso).

Exxon Mobil have been active in lobbying the US Government on Kyoto, are involved in the Chad - Cameroon pipeline project and continue to publish propaganda claiming climate change is not a scientifically-proven inevitability. For more info about the company see: www.campaignexxonmobil.org.

The date of the action is yet to be announced, but will be coordinated by Friends of the Earth Melbourne.

The torture trade

Apr 10 - The trade in torture weapons such as electroshock weapons, and the role that private companies in some countries, notably the United States and the United Kingdom, stressed in a document released by Amnesty International called "Stopping the Torture Trade". The document calls for a stop in the production and trade of torture weapons.

According to Amnesty International, US companies, as well as

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Youth get critical of Greens Party policy

MARNI CORDELL

In the lead up to a federal election, it's always interesting to watch the various tactics of political parties in securing the very slippery 'youth vote'. While many regard the elevation of Doc Marten-sporting Natasha Stott-Despoja as a definite winner for the Democrats this year, the truth remains that the Greens Party receive the biggest (proportional) youth demographic.

But as the Greens Party grow in numbers, support and international power; are they in danger of losing touch with the very elements that attract so many young people to them?

The prime impetus behind the Global Greens Conference, which took place in Canberra from the 14th-16th of April, was the development of a Global Greens Charter - effectively uniting Greens parties worldwide with a common declaration. The conference was attended by Greens representatives from over 70 countries.

However, the conference also sought to blur the lines between the green (or environmental) movement, and

the political party of the same name - and certainly succeeded in persuading a fair number of previously unaligned young 'activists' that their work as defenders of social and environmental justice, also qualified them as party faithfuls. The message was clear and the correlation largely unquestioned.

A workshop, chaired by young Greens from Mexico, New Zealand and various parts of Australia, was held to discuss the role of youth within the Global Greens Charter, as well as within the green movement in whole.

One of the main questions to come out of the workshop was why the category of youth deserved special attention - was it somehow different to other categories of 'disadvantage' such as racial or other minority groups?

In response Kate Walsh, one of the organisers of the Global Young Greens conference held in Sydney the week prior, commented: "viewing young people as a sector, or 'category of disadvantage' is an insult to me. I personally can't wait for the day when we no longer need a Young Greens conference". But that day will not come until young people are proportionately represented

within the party. 'Youth' does not need to be a segregated category of special interest and attention, young people need to be integrated and fairly represented within the main party structure.

While it's true that the Greens platform is the only one that many young people have ever viewed as accessible, that support does not come through blind party faith. It has been developed through a critical evaluation of how the party functions, and a calculated conclusion that the Greens appropriately address some of the vital environmental and social justice issues concerning young people today.

The youth vote is by no means a long-term certainty for the Greens, however, and there were certainly fears amongst workshop participants as to the future integrity of the party.

Many of the young, active people that have found a space within the Greens philosophy are apprehensive that, as the party grows to become a global power - which was undoubtedly a main aim of this conference - it's members will no longer involve themselves in direct community activism. Many questioned the visible lack of indigenous Australian participation

in the 'global' conference.

As New Zealand MP Nandor Tanczos commented: there is "a fear that the reason we got involved in the first place will be lost". And that

"The youth vote is by no means a long-term certainty for the Greens party"

parliamentary work will lull Green politicians into the illusion that parliament is where the answers lie.

He further echoed the thoughts of many of the workshop participants in remarking that "the Green party is just a vehicle", and the main emphasis of this movement should not be on the vehicle but on "where we are going and what we are trying to do". Parliament should remain merely a tool of our various activisms.

Let's just hope that in their attempt to make globalised statements, the Greens don't gloss-over or bulldoze the interests of the many minority groups that have only just begun to find a safe house within their philosophies and policies.

To maintain youth popularity - and even more importantly, to remain a healthy force on this planet - it is integral that the Greens remain focused on direct, local action in their move towards becoming a global power.

Reliving the past

DAMIEN LAWSON

Bathed in bright sunshine last Easter Saturday, a friend and I drove east down Balaclava Road. "Wonder if they'll turn up" we speculated as we pulled in under the oak trees next to the park, across from the Jewish community centre, in Caulfield, outer Melbourne. Television crews were interviewing two elderly women as we walked down to join the protest.

There were a hundred or so people sitting, standing and chanting in the April sun, but the Nazi-philes were absent.

After distributing a leaflet emblazoned with swastikas throughout the south east of Melbourne that posed the question: "Have you ever stopped to think that Hitler was right?" and calling for a rally, the neo-fascists failed to show up. Perhaps the leaflet, distributed during Passover in suburbs with a high density of residents of Jewish origin, was seen as enough of achievement by these Nazi wannabes.

As one man in attendance said, "my grandmother almost fell over when she found this in the letter box."

Conspicuous by their difference from the rest of the run-of-the-mill inner city protesters, was the group of senior citizens standing at one end of the gathering. One man sitting in a deck chair held a home made sign, "My father, mother, three

brothers and sisters were killed by the Nazis".

Another man, Motek Brajtberg, told me his experience of the Lodz ghetto in Poland. On May 1, 1940 the Nazis closed off the ghetto of 168,000 people. As a young boy Motok and his brother managed to escape the Nazis. Tens of thousands of others in Lodz didn't.

Morru, also a Lodz survivor, welcomed the protest. "This shows that David Irving [British academic poser and Holocaust denier] lies. This demonstration shows the Nazis existed and the Holocaust happened. We are too old to fight now, but we can protest."

Three young men, who each had grandparents who survived, were ready to fight. David, a thirty year old truck driver, said, "There is no room for that crap. We need to put a stop to it when it starts, as soon as it starts. I told my wife get some chicken organised, because you may have to bring it to me in jail after I deal with these Nazis."

There was less enthusiasm, however, for the connections made by speakers between the tripartisan racism of Conservative/Labour and One Nation towards migrants and asylum seekers and this latest neo-Nazi attempt at self-expression. While spokespeople articulated how the objects of Australia's border policy - thousands of people currently interned in desert camps and treated as second class citizens without rights - were subject to



Holocaust survivors gather at a rally in outer Melbourne. Photo by Louis Porter

a modern form of extreme nationalism, many who attended saw it as legitimate policy.

It became clear that while there is consensus about

the horror of past racism, current forms of racialised social control can have a legitimacy even amongst those one would expect to be most critical.

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companies from the United Kingdom, France, and Russia sell weapons and other equipment used for torture. Items include high-tech electroshock weapons, leg irons and serrated thumb cuffs designed to tear flesh if a detainee intends to escape. Amnesty International believes that some of these items - such as flesh tearing thumb cuffs and electric shock weapons - are "inherently cruel" and their trade should be banned outright. Even though it is illegal to own some of the equipment in the US, the US Department of has granted export licenses for this kind of weapons under the category of "control crime equipment" for sales that amount to \$97 million since 1997. Data from that Department also show that Saudi Arabia, Russia, Taiwan, Israel and Egypt are among the major recipients of US equipment.

Not with my money

Apr 11 - Students on five continents and in some 80 cities worldwide took to the streets to protest Citibank's (Citi) leading role in funding environmentally and socially destructive activities. From New York to Germany to India, students launched an international boycott against Citi credit cards with protests at bank branches, teach-ins at colleges and universities, and "Cut up Your Citi Card" ceremonies. "Citi is living richly off of environmental destruction," commented Ilyse Hogue of the Rainforest Action Network "Students are outraged, and are standing up to say, 'Not With My Money!'"

At demonstrations around the globe, concerned citizens and Citi customers drew attention to the company's backing of egregious projects, such as the controversial Chad-Cameroon rainforest oil pipeline, China's Three Gorges Dam, and expanding palm plantations in Indonesia that destroy critical rainforest habitat for endangered orangutans. Students also highlighted Citigroup's policies of sub-prime or 'predatory lending' in urban areas that disproportionately affect people with lower incomes and communities of color, as well as the corporation's sale of World Bank Bonds that strap developing nations with increasing debt.

"Student consumers are the bread and butter of Citibank's credit card business, as the company counts on them to become long-time customers," said Hogue.

The campaign's goal is to transform Citi's funding practices. Citigroup is America's largest financial institution, yet the industry leader uses virtually no social or environmental criteria in its investment decision-making.

East Timor Organic Authenticity

The East Timor Transitional Cabinet today endorsed a draft regulation establishing an organic products regime, for referral to the National Council. The text gives legal status to a National Standard for Organic Products, which is designed to ensure the continuing economic viability of East Timor's organic products in overseas markets. The regulation will require operators who label their products as organic to comply with the National Standard. It will also require any product with organic labeling that is presented for export or sale domestically to be

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Horse's Head features in battle over Historic Wall



The infamous horse head. Photo by Seamas McCaffrey

SEAMAS MCCAFFREY

The leafy inner Melbourne suburb of Parkville may no longer be known for its prostitution and marauding vermin but on April 8th a local residents group fought off rain to bring all this back to life. As part of Heritage Week celebrations, members of the Parkville Association provided an historically annotated walking tour of the area. One of the main features of this tour was the unique Northern Cattlemarket Wall, the subject of a recent hearing before the Heritage Council of Victoria Registration Committee.

Built in 1888, the wall surrounded one of Melbourne's livestock markets, a trading point for horses, cattle, and pigs. Its main purposes were to keep out vermin (both animal and human), to retain a more level surface on the sloping creek bank that was South Parkville and to separate nearby residential areas from the market. Over a century after its construction, the wall is still managing to divide

residential and business interests.

Application for Heritage listing of the wall, made by the Parkville Association with the support of Heritage Victoria, has been strongly contested by Bio21 developer: the University of Melbourne. Bio21, a \$400 million biotechnology and biomedical research and development venture, includes such partners as the Royal Melbourne Hospital and the Victorian State Government. Premier Steve Bracks personally launched the project, which will focus heavily on commercial development of the research undertaken, and has committed an investment of \$50 million.

Plans for Bio21's first stage of construction, scheduled to commence June 30th, included demolition of the Flemington Road side of the Market Wall to make way for a ten-story building. The University aired plans for the project at community information sessions late last year, and claims to have addressed concerns raised by locals. The Parkville Association did not officially attend these sessions. Spokespersons

for the University and the Association still disagree on the adequacy of public consultation.

The Heritage Committee hearing heard two very differing opinions on the relative importance of retaining the disputed part of the wall. In making their cases, both groups thoroughly explored past uses of the wall, the Northern Market and indeed the general role of markets in Melbourne at different times in the city's history. The University maintained that Melbourne was never a "market town", per se. The Parkville Association managed to match the University's historians by calling a member who related childhood memories of the operating market.

Melbourne City Council, the body for whom the wall was first built, made a submission supporting a listing for the wall that did not include its disputed Flemington Road side, on the grounds that this section had already been significantly altered. In another twist to the hearing, it was revealed that similar such limited listings were applied for previously by the Parkville Association in 1982 and 1996.

Figuring prominently in the arguments over the wall's significance was a stone horse head that is fixed atop its corner at Story Street and Park Drive. Saved from the original market entrance the horse's head has traditionally been the target of missiles, thrown in the past by visiting US soldiers and more recently by local school children. Over the past six months it has been hurled about in the complicated tussle over the wall's status.

The horse's head was restored by the University in an attempt to appease locals, but this restoration merely gave evidence to the Association's claims that the University had already recognised the wall's historical importance. Not since The Godfather has a horse's head proved so influential.

The newly smiling restored carving seems to represent the compromise of old and new that the University and the Council would like to have reached, but many residents, quite understandably, preferred the chipped original.

Last week the Heritage Council announced register listing of the entire Northern Cattlemarket Wall. The granted protection will necessitate significant changes to Bio21's plans and make construction more difficult. The Parkville Association is now regrouping to tackle the University over increased traffic flow on local streets. The horse appears unmoved by developments.

Seamas McCaffrey currently resides in Story Street, opposite the wall.

Proposed Internet censorship in South Australia

JAY GIBSON

Legislative attempts to regulate Internet content are currently being debated in the South Australian Parliament.

Introduced into the SA Parliament on 8th November 2000, an Internet Censorship Bill has been listed for debate in the next sitting of the Legislative Council commencing 1st May 2001. The proposed Bill criminalises the online publishing of content that is unsuitable for children; even if that content is only made available to adults in restricted areas.

The Online Services section of the Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Amendment Bill 2000 is a part of the Commonwealth Internet censorship legislation. The South Australian Liberal Government is the first to act on the Commonwealth Government's request that State/Territory Governments

introduce Internet regulations.

Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory had already enacted censorship legislation prior to the proposed 'national regime', and it is not known whether they will amend their legislation to bring it in to line with the Commonwealth request.

In essence the Bill intends to criminalise the publication of 'matter unsuitable to minors' on the Internet. 'Matter unsuitable for minors' is defined as content that is, or would be, classified R by a majority (not unanimous) decision of the members of the Office of Film and Literature Classification (OFLC).

Even content only available to adults in password-restricted areas would be subject to the proposed legislation. The proposed maximum penalty is \$10,000; the maximum penalty for publishing this type of material offline is \$5,000.

Essentially, the Bill proposes to make certain information that is freely available offline, unable to be published on the Internet. Therefore, a newspaper publisher for example, selling electronic copies of archived newspaper articles online, could be prosecuted.

The Bill enables the prosecution of content providers to commence prior to the classification of the material in question. This places police, who are not specialists or trained in classification guidelines, in the position of deciding what content may be deemed unsuitable by the OFLC. Citizens of South Australia are then subject to criminal proceedings for failure to foresee the classification of the OFLC.

The jurisdictional proportions of the Bill are also unclear. The Bill does not clarify whether content is 'made available' in the state where a user downloads it, in the state where the

web server is located, or in the state where the content provider resides. Similarly, content providers are not given an opportunity to take down material when they have inadvertently miscalculated their content's probable classification.

Electronic Frontiers Australia, a non-profit national organisation formed to protect and promote the civil liberties of users and operators of computer based communications systems, have been lobbying the South Australian parliament to amend the Bill. They stress that the Bill would simply force Australians to host their sites in other countries, where such regulatory burdens are not imposed - thus leading to a decline in the online economy in South Australia and other states that adopt similar legislation.

<http://www.efa.org.au/>

<http://www.parliament.sa.gov.au/>

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Biotech companies breach guidelines

NIK BEURET

Tasmania's desire to remain "GE Free" may have suffered a serious setback with the recent revelation that two giant biotechnology corporations have deliberately released genetically engineered organisms into the Tasmanian wild.

On February 28th this year, the Interim Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (IOGTR) revealed that biotech companies Monsanto and Aventis had breached guidelines for growing crops.

According to federal Health Minister Michael Wooldridge, the two corporations are guilty of 21 separate breaches of guidelines on genetically engineered organisms in Tasmania.

Although Tasmania is nominally an area free from genetically engineered organisms, there have been numerous 'field trials' of GE crops in recent years - most were undertaken by Monsanto and Aventis, in partnership with the company Serve-Ag.

Between 1995 and 2000 there were 58 'trial sites' in Tasmania of crops such as Canola, Indian Mustard and potatoes. The location of all these sites was, and continues to be, secret.

Last year, IOGTR conducted two inspections in Tasmania. They initially gave a week's notice to Serve-Ag and the farmers involved in the trials. The first inspection found 11 breaches of guidelines. IOGTR subsequently decided to conduct a follow up inspection, which turned up 10 more breaches.

The breaches of GMAC guidelines included:

- Not removing new GE crop growths after the trial had ended
- Not removing GE crop growths from neighbouring fields and areas
- Not leaving the trial sites fallow after the trials had ended (guidelines state that fields must be left fallow for a minimum of three years after a trial has ended)
- Hiring beekeepers to pollinate GE crops without properly informing them. These same bees were then used to pollinate non-GE crops, risking contamination.

Upon the announcement of the breaches, Minister Wooldridge said that voluntary controls were "flagrantly flouted", and condemned Aventis and Monsanto for their involvement in the worst breach of crop controls Australia has ever seen.

For their part, Serve-Ag claim that the Government is politicising the issue, and is causing needless alarm within the community over a known and managed agronomic situation.

It turns out that although Monsanto and Aventis, along with Serve-Ag, are guilty of breaching gene technology guidelines, these guidelines are not yet law. The law that will cover gene technology, the Gene Tech Act 2000, does not come into force until June 21st this year, meaning there are no legal grounds for prosecution.

Biotech companies will, however, have to apply for licences from June this year. To be granted a licence, they must be deemed 'fit'. Several environmental organisations, including the Genethics network, have indicated that they will be investigating possible steps to have both Monsanto and Aventis deemed 'unfit' to hold a licence.

The people vs economic globalisation

ANJIE LOWSEE

It didn't start in Seattle; it won't end in Quebec.

Throughout the Americas, citizens are preparing for what are expected to be the largest anti-corporate protests since the Seattle demonstrations against the WTO in November of 1999.

From April 20th - 22nd in Quebec City, Canada, the Summit of the Americas is meeting to negotiate the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Heads of State and Trade Ministers from throughout the Americas and Caribbean will gather to advance what many are calling "NAFTA on steroids".

NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, is a "free trade" pact ratified in 1994 between Canada, the US, and Mexico. Its effects have been devastating to workers, farmers, and the environment in all three countries. It is estimated that 400, 000 jobs have been lost in the US due to NAFTA.

NAFTA makes it easier for corporations to shift production to Mexico where labor standards are weak or non-existent and environmental regulations are lax and rarely enforced. Driven to increase profit margins, corporations have used the flexibility of NAFTA to break union contracts and cut wages in Canada and the US by threatening to move operations to Mexico. In many cases the corporations have moved their production facilities south, where they grossly exploit Mexican workers particularly in the Export Processing Zone on the Mexican side of the Texan border.

The proposed FTAA will extend NAFTA to the 34 nations of the Americas with the exception of Cuba. FTAA also allows corporations to trade in uncharted sectors of the economy, forcing countries to open up services such as

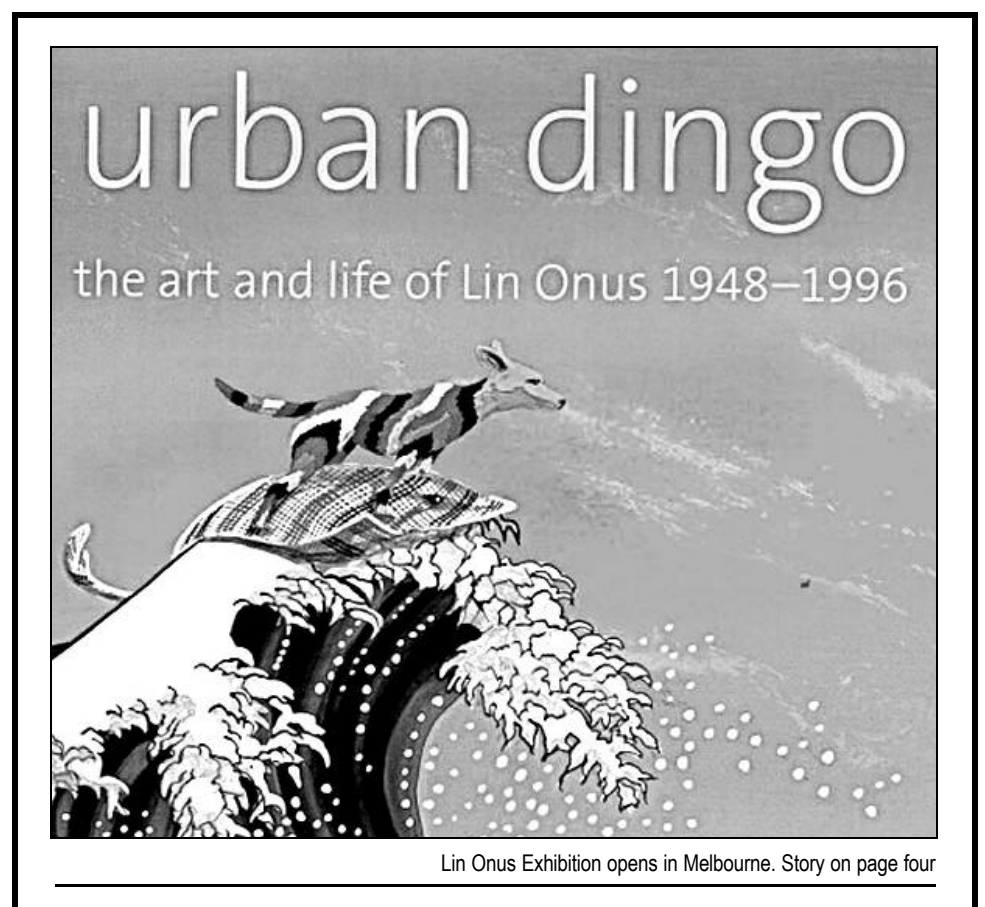
schools, water, hospitals, postal services, etc for privatisation. If a country or community refused privatisation it would be classified as a 'barrier to trade' under FTAA. This could result in governments being sued by corporations for loss of profits, or even potential profits, as has already occurred numerous times under NAFTA.

In every case that has so far come before the NAFTA tribunal, the corporation has won the case, forcing nation states to overturn and annul laws protecting human rights, working conditions, or the environment. The FTAA will operate in a similar manner, allowing corporations to do away with any "democratic" accountability that health and safety laws provide to the people. The FTAA is an attempt by the US to further secure Latin America as its turf, by setting up a trade bloc where the US is the most powerful player.

The corporate offensive is however not going unchallenged. Even within the FTAA negotiations there are major rifts, particularly between Brazil and the US. Brazil already has a trade bloc, called Mercosur, with Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay and feels the FTAA may threaten Brazil's dominance in the Southern Cone.

The most interesting action around the FTAA however, is out on the streets. Just last week 10, 000 people protested in Buenos Aires, Argentina, against a meeting of trade ministers working to advance the FTAA. Protestors were met with tear gas and rubber bullets. One thousand people were stopped at the Argentina-Brazil border and prevented from entering to voice their opposition to an agreement that affects 800 million people being negotiated behind closed doors.

The FTAA document has not been released to



Lin Onus Exhibition opens in Melbourne. Story on page four

the public, but the American Business Roundtable, a group made up of 500 corporations, has a seat at the negotiating table. The FTAA, under pressure from civil society, is now saying it will release parts of the text after the Quebec Summit of the Americas.

In Quebec City, the Canadian authorities are preparing for their biggest security operation ever. Quebec City was originally a French fortress securing the St Lawrence River. They have erected a 4.5 kilometer chain and concrete fence around an already walled city. Prisoners have been moved out of the city jail to other locations to make room for protestors. Police will be armed with plastic bullets that can break bones, and snipers with live fire as well as tear gas and pepper spray. An attempt was made to ban scarves in frigid Quebec City but failed after citizen protest. Draconian police measures and the undemocratic FTAA have created a major backlash against the Canadian government.

Upwards of 35,000 people are expected to converge on the city and Canadian authorities are expecting to turn back 10, 000 from the US border. Here they highlight one of the growing contradictions of so called "free trade". Whilst

money and corporations flow more freely across borders, those that disagree with this undemocratic process are being more and more restricted.

Major actions have been planned to disrupt the conference in Quebec City as well as many actions along the borders of the US and Canada and in cities throughout the hemisphere. Convergence centers for demonstrators have been set up along the border to deal with the thousands of US and other citizens expected to be rejected from entering Canada. One group, Ya Basta!, is planning a major crossing at the Mohawk reservation in upstate New York, where they plan to liberate the border to allow people through.

The massive convergence of diverse movements and struggles in preparation for Quebec 2001 has already created a democratic space for discussion of major issues and reinvigorated civil society. This week's actions should take that further.

For more information and regular updates check out:

www.cmaq.net
www.vermont.indymedia.org
www.quebec2001.net

WorldBriefs

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certified by the East Timor
Transitional Administration as
organic.

New security plan for Aceh

14 Apr - President Abdurrahman Wahid of Indonesia has eventually given in and issued an official directive to civilian and security officials to restore law and order in the troubled province of Aceh a minister said on Thursday. Defense minister Mahfud M.D. said the presidential instruction, which was signed on April 11, encompassed political, economic, social, legal and security measures.

The Asian Human Rights Commission released a statement: The Indonesian parliament has authorised the Indonesian Military (TNI) to conduct a 'limited military operation' (re-labeled a 'limited security operation') in Aceh against the Free Movement (GAM), who are fighting for an independent Aceh. The operation is supposedly aimed at the leadership of the GAM. However, it is clear that the TNI have used this opportunity to target human rights defenders and to create terror amongst the civilians, as part of a prolonged campaign to destroy the rule of law in Aceh. ExxonMobil's decision to stop gas fields operation in Arun, Aceh province, last month, citing incessant GAM attacks on their installation, has made the government to consider a repressive approach to the problem.

Sources

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